



MAKING MAGIC: 100 YEARS OF DISNEY

The Jungle Book

Moose Hunters

Director: Ben Sharpsteen
USA 1937
9 mins

The Jungle Book

Directed by: Wolfgang Reitherman
©: Walt Disney Productions
a Walt Disney production
Distributed by: Buena Vista Distribution Co., Inc.
Presented by: Walt Disney
Production Manager: Don Duckwall
Story: Larry Clemmons, Ralph Wright, Ken Anderson, Vance Gerry
Inspired by the Rudyard Kipling 'Mowgli' stories
Directing Animators: Milt Kahl, Ollie Johnston, Frank Thomas, John Lounsbery
Character Animation: Hal King, Eric Cleworth, Eric Larson, Fred Hellmich, Walt Stanchfield, John Ewing, Dick Lucas
Effects Animation: Dan Macmanus
Layout: Don Griffith, Basil Davidovich, Tom Codrick, Dale Barnhart, Sylvia Roemer
Background Styling: Al Dempster
Background: Bill Layne, Ralph Hulett, Art Riley, Thelma Witmer, Frank Armitage
Film Editors: Tom Acosta, Norman Carlisle
Colour by: Technicolor
Music: George Bruns
Songs: Robert B. Sherman, Richard M. Sherman
'The Bare Necessities': Terry Gilkyson
Sung by: Phil Harris
Orchestration: Walter Sheets
Music Editor: Evelyn Kennedy
Sound: Robert O. Cook
Sound System: RCA Sound Recording
Voice Cast:
Phil Harris ('Baloo' the Bear)
Sebastian Cabot ('Bagheera' the Panther)
Louis Prima ('King Louie' of the Apes)
George Sanders ('Shere Khan' the Tiger)
Sterling Holloway ('Kaa' the Snake)
J. Pat O'Malley ('Colonel Hathi' the Elephant)
Bruce Reitherman ('Mowgli' the Man Cub)
Verna Felton, Clint Howard (elephants)
Chad Stuart, Lord Tim Hudson (vultures)
John Abbott, Ben Wright (wolves)
Darleen Carr (the girl)
USA 1967©
78 mins

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SIGHT AND SOUND

The Indian jungle is the setting for this wonderful adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's tale of an abandoned orphan named Mowgli who is raised by wolves. During the course of his adventure-packed young life, Mowgli befriends a bear (Baloo) and panther (Bagheera), encounters an unpredictable orang-utan king, narrowly escapes a hypnotising snake and is pursued by Shere Khan, a malevolent tiger. It was the last film that Walt Disney worked on and remains a fitting tribute to him. It is also deserving of its place among the list of the most popular animated films of all time.

bfi.org.uk

'That looks good... hopping up and down now... wiggling his fanny...' In charming archive footage, *The Jungle Book* animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston pore through a sequence of Thomas' drawings, featuring the bear character Baloo. As Thomas lets his drawings fall, flipbook fashion, his friend mimics the bear's swinging; a balding fiftysomething man in short-sleeved shirt and glasses, who's so spontaneously caught up in the motion that he's moved to dance.

The Jungle Book was the last cartoon feature supervised by Walt Disney, who died ten months before its release in October 1967. Some commentators see Walt's input as perfunctory, though the 2007 DVD presses the case that he drove the film. A hit on its first release, *The Jungle Book* remains one of the most fondly regarded Disneys among non-cartoon fans. One need only hum a few notes from the breezy 'Bare Necessities' (sung by Phil Harris' Baloo, who dominates the film), to draw smiles from any crowd.

More serious-minded commentators, though, often take the part of the disapproving panther Bagheera. Leonard Maltin called *The Jungle Book* 'one of the most forgettable' of Disney's films. Michael Barrier deemed it one of the worst. Even John Grant, who defends the film, complains that its story 'meanders a little aimlessly; one keeps waiting for something really bogging to happen, but it never quite does.'

As with other Disney's adaptations, one can mourn the lost opportunities in the source material. For example, Rudyard Kipling's book features a lyrical, dazzling description of the jungle boy Mowgli being captured by monkeys and swung with them through the treetops. In the film, this is reduced to a few throwaway shots while the artists serve up slapstick for Baloo and the monkeys, exposing the mechanics of the Disney formula even more nakedly than the recycled animation. When the characters snatch Mowgli from each other after 'I Wanna Be like You,' their manic motions are taken from Rat, Mole and the weasels in a 1949 Disney feature, *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*.

Yet *The Jungle Book* has wit with its rough and tumble. The military elephant Colonel Hathi inspects one of his troops and tuts, 'A dusty muzzle... Soldier, remember in battle a trunk can save your life.' His comically grave pachyderm face, drawn by John Lounsbery, is a mass of pompous lines, a stylistic holdover from *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*. The girlish sibilants of Sterling Holloway, voicing Kaa, are matched in the snake's curling and coiling. Louis Prima's performance is punctuated by the oversized arms of ape king

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The Jungle Book

Thu 3 Aug 14:20; Sun 6 Aug 13:00;
Wed 16 Aug 20:45; Wed 30 Aug 14:20

Beaches Thu 3 Aug 18:00; Sat 19 Aug 17:30

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Fri 4 Aug 18:00; Sun 13 Aug 18:10;
Tue 22 Aug 14:20; Wed 23 Aug 20:20

101 Dalmatians

Sat 5 Aug 13:20; Thu 10 Aug 14:20;
Sat 19 Aug 15:30; Tue 29 Aug 14:20

Bedknobs and Broomsticks

Sat 5 Aug 15:40; Thu 17 Aug 14:20;
Sun 27 Aug 18:20

Sister Act Sat 5 Aug 20:40; Fri 18 Aug 18:20

Zootropolis (aka Zootopia)

Sun 6 Aug 13:10; Fri 25 Aug 18:00

Silent Cinema: Disney's Silent Shorts + intro

Sun 6 Aug 15:30

Freaky Friday

Sun 6 Aug 18:20; Fri 18 Aug 20:30;
Thu 24 Aug 20:50

The Parent Trap

Mon 7 Aug 18:00; Sun 20 Aug 15:10

Turning Red Tue 8 Aug 14:20; Sat 26 Aug 15:30

Pinocchio

Wed 9 Aug 14:20; Sat 12 Aug 11:30 (+ extended
intro); Mon 14 Aug 14:20; Sun 20 Aug 19:00

Mary Poppins

Wed 9 Aug 17:50; Mon 21 Aug 14:20;
Mon 28 Aug 13:00

Up Wed 9 Aug 20:30; Mon 28 Aug 12:30

The Love Bug

Fri 11 Aug 20:30; Sat 12 Aug 11:50;
Sun 20 Aug 13:30

A Disney Day for Young Audiences

Sat 12 Aug 11:30-16:30

Tarzan Sat 12 Aug 18:00; Sat 26 Aug 12:00

Soul Sat 12 Aug 20:30; Sat 19 Aug 13:00;

Thu 24 Aug 14:20

The Lion King

Sun 13 Aug 13:00 (+ Funday Sing-along);
Sat 26 Aug 20:30; Thu 31 Aug 14:20

The Fiendishly Difficult Disney Quiz

Sun 13 Aug 15:30 Blue Room

Bambi

Sun 13 Aug 15:50; Wed 16 Aug 14:20;
Sat 26 Aug 12:20; Mon 28 Aug 16:20

Finding Nemo

Sun 13 Aug 18:30; Sun 27 Aug 13:30

The Rescuers

Mon 14 Aug 18:30; Sat 19 Aug 15:50

Luca Mon 14 Aug 20:30; Sun 27 Aug 13:15

Ratatouille Sat 19 Aug 12:00; Tue 29 Aug 20:30

Dick Tracy

Fri 25 Aug 20:40; Tue 29 Aug 18:10 (+ intro by
Ben Roberts, BFI CEO)

The Little Mermaid

Sun 27 Aug 16:00; Mon 28 Aug 16:40

Louie, giving his trumpeting mass and meat. The villainous Shere Khan (drawn by Milt Kahl) has only to turn away from the camera, letting George Sanders' silky tones complement his rippling stripes. 'And now for my rendezvous with the little lost man-cub...'

The man-cub himself shows little sign of his feral upbringing, being malleable or pigheaded as the story demands. Yet there's a pathos to the repeated scenes of him wandering dissolute through the jungle, oblivious to its beauty, amid the melancholia of George Bruns' music, Walter Sheet's orchestration and the jungle backdrops styled by Al Dempster, which tend to *Bambi's* watercolour impressionism. It's these elements, between and behind the fun, that give the film its form.

Even young viewers see how dull Mowgli is, which in turn highlights the grown-up, parental, perspective of Bagheera. The panther frames the film in his opening voiceover, and later argues Baloo (who wants to adopt Mowgli) into giving up the boy in an unshowy and sensitive scene. Baloo and Bagheera foreshadow the odd-couple duos in Pixar films; their parental responsibilities especially anticipate *Monsters, Inc.*

Of course, kids will lose interest in Mowgli, as soon as he's 'twitterpated' (to use *Bambi's* phrase for seduction) by a village girl and heads into manhood – a fact that Kipling appreciated in his stories, dismissing Mowgli's married life as a story for grown-ups. Johnston's animation of the scene suggests romance, even sexuality, but Mowgli's final expression is a goofy grin, deflating the moment even before Baloo's deadpan, 'He's hooked!' No matter; we turn and head back into the jungle with Baloo and Bagheera, back to the dancing and singing.

Andrew Osmond, *100 Animated Feature Films* (BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

A contemporary review

Kipling enthusiasts may recoil in horror, and those constitutionally allergic to the Disney cartoon remain unpersuaded, but this animated feature (the last under Disney's personal supervision) is in its way surprisingly engaging. Certainly it is far and away the best of its kind to emerge for some time. The standard of design remains the same as before, but the film scores with an inventive and often witty script and some highly entertaining vocal characterisations. George Sanders in particular is very funny as a suavely menacing Shere Khan. This is Disney at his most imaginative, with even the sentimentality kept well in check.

Monthly Film Bulletin, January 1968

With thanks to The Walt Disney Company